

Fishing Tournament Advisory Committee

February 15, 2006

10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Holiday Inn, Wausau/Schofield

DRAFT

AGENDA

I. Welcome and Introductions (5 minutes)

A. Welcome and introduction of attendees.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>
Patrick Schmalz	WDNR - Madison (FH)	Ron Benjamin	WDNR - LaCrosse (FH)
Roger Dreher	WI Assn. of Lakes	Russell Wilson	WDNR - LaCrosse (LE)
Scott van Egeren	WDNR - Madison (FH)	Ted Lind	WI Council of Sport Fishing Organizations
Brett Stapelmann	WI Bowfishing Assn.	John Aschenbrenner	WI Conservation Congress
Larry Vanderhoef	WI Wildlife Federation	Robert Selk	Trout Unlimited
Bob Miller	WI Wildlife Federation	Ted Heitschmidt	WI Bass Nation
Sue Beyler	WDNR - Waukesha (FH)	Tom Van Haren	WDNR - Madison (LE)
John Kubisiak	WDNR - Rhinelander (FH)	Kurt Welke	WDNR - Fitchburg (FH)
Tim Kroeff	WDNR - Sturgeon Bay (FH)	Barry Meister	WDNR - Madison (FH)
Mark Soletske	N.E.W. Bass	Dan Brovarney	WI Bass Nation
Lyle Gear	WI SMB Alliance	Tim Andryk	WDNR - Madison (LS)
Terry Hilbert	WI Bass Nation	Mike Hofmann	WI Bass Federation
Bob Hujik	WDNR - Eau Claire (FH)	Steve Poll	World Walleye Assn.

B. Agenda Repair - **NONE**

II. Fishing Tournament Rule Development (4 hours)

- A. Complete Review of Components of Act 249 – Specific rule-making authority and
- B. Recommendation of specific rules

Rules governing frequency of tournaments and dates on which they can be held:

- **Current rules do not allow any tournaments for a particular species of fish on the opening weekend of any fishing season on any water subject to the opening.**
- **Patrick Schmalz suggested eliminating the prohibition on opening weekend fishing tournaments and prohibiting tournaments (except traditional events) on Memorial Day weekend, Fourth of July and Labor Day weekend.**
- **Opinion was split on whether or not the rule needed to include holiday prohibition of tournaments.**
 - **Agreement that opening day is not a recreational conflict. However, Larry Vanderhoef voiced concern about removing bass from nests (even for live release) during spawning.**
 - **Fish Biologists agreed that the three holidays are the busiest times and have the most user conflicts.**

- Biologists and sponsors also agreed that big tournament groups do not try for holiday weekends, and that small traditional tournaments have not created problems.
- Roger Dreher stated that the holiday rule needs to be explicitly worded to include the weekend closest to or including the 4th of July, not just the 4th of July.
- Mark Soletske brought up concern over lack of May dates for bass tournaments at Sturgeon Bay and did not want that water regulated for Memorial Day.

Rules specifying the number of days over which tournaments may be held.

- Schmalz suggested changing from the current 3 day limit (this limit does not apply to Great Lakes) to a 4 day limit to accommodate the elimination tournament format.
- Concern brought up (Ron Benjamin and Soletske) that this rule can be a loophole if sponsors apply for two permits and hold back to back tournaments.
- Also concern over the possibility of local municipalities limiting local access for long tournaments. Tim Andryk stated that municipalities have this legal ability and it is out of the DNR's hands.

Rules governing the hours during which fishing tournaments may be held.

- Time limits per day
- Start and end times
- Current and proposed rules limit tournaments to 10 hours per day.
- Question as to what is the goal of limiting fishing tournament times?
 - Schmalz replied that it limits fish handling.
 - Kurt Welke replied that limits allow for standards for enforcement.
- Concern over already occurring tournaments at night (bowfishing tourneys) or for more than ten hours (Wolf River Gun Club Tourney). Terry Hilbert and Brett Stapelmann voiced opposition to limiting these traditional tournaments.

Rules specifying location of waterbodies where tournaments may be held.

- Andryk stated that the purpose is to write rules to limit portions of waterbodies that may be fished in a tournament.
- Mike Hofmann replied that fish biologist already do this at their discretion.

Rules specifying the species of fish that may be targeted.

- Welke asked group to think about rare species in the long-term – which fish may be targeted in the future and do we want them to be? (eg. flatheads, sturgeon, etc.)
- Robert Selk voiced concern over allowing brook trout tournaments. Black Earth currently holds a children's tournament.
- Tom Van Haren suggested that biologists could set species limits in places where rare species may exist (eg. black buffalo).
- The current rules already allow for biologist discretion.

Rules specifying bag and size limits for fish that are caught at fishing tournaments.

- This can only address reduced bag or size limits because they cannot be increased.
- Soletske liked the idea of tournament penalties for anglers who accidentally kill fish.
- Vanderhoef stated that if tournament anglers have to abide by slot limits that the amount of tournament pressure on lakes with favorable limits will increase.

Rules governing the time of year when tournaments may be held.

Rules specifying the qualities of waters where tournaments are held.

- This could include Outstanding or Exceptional Resource Waters.

Rules governing the reporting of tournament results.

- Current rule states that tournament results must be returned no later than 30 days following the last day of the tournament. Two year denial of permits will be issued to persons who do not return results.
- Hilbert stated that it is too much for a biologist or sponsor to have to measure all fish, but easy end results should be reported.
- Two comments suggested having sponsors report their data electronically. Vanderhoef suggested that sponsors could be a blank cd to return to DNR with data.
- Larry also suggested that water temperature and dissolved oxygen be measured at the release site for live release.
- Scott van Egeren asked if it would be possible for sponsors to get individual anglers to take lengths on all fish caught. Hilbert does not think that return rate of forms would be high, Soletske disagreed.
- van Egeren asked if it was feasible to get the results for each species, instead of lumping bass, stizostedions, panfish, etc. Hilbert and Steve Poll agree that the catch number of fish can be split by species but total weight or individual weights of different species would double the weigh-in time.
- Ted Heitschmidt offered that bass clubs have this data for over ten years and would be happy to share it with the DNR.
- Dreher asked if we can give incentives (positive or negative) for reporting results. Schmalz responded that fines are in the new bill and that enforcement could be stepped up.
- Schmalz commented that we still want reports if no one catches fish.
- Poll suggested that organizations should be held responsible, not sponsors; Selk agreed.
- Several biologists stated that they do not check that results come in. Schmalz stated that this needs to be changed in the DNR manual code.

Rules specifying fees for fishing tournament permits for training or educational programs, including reduced fees in appropriate circumstances.

- Schmalz stated that permit fees proposed are based on two hours of senior biologist time and fringe per permit.

C. Review/Modification of Rule Change DRAFT

A list of most important points to address is created by attendees:

Hilbert – who is required to get a permit?

Welke – number of participants per lake

Selk – minimum size of rivers where tournaments are permitted

Dreher – live release restrictions

Hilbert – permit fees

Who is required to have a permit?

- Bob Hujik and Welke do not want to make exemptions for fishing tournament permits.
- Small club events (<20 boats)
 - Hilbert did not agree that small club events should need to pay application fees for all events, but perhaps should pay one fee for the season. He thought they should still have permits to avoid user conflict.
 - Dan Brovarney stated that the DNR would be losing thousands of dollars and still have the workload if small club events did not require application fees.
 - John Kubisiak wanted some size limit cut off for permits, so as not to triple workload.
- Hujik stated that a central permit submitting location is needed to lessen workload.
- Group vote on whether or not to set limits on who is required to have a permit.
 - Fluctuating vote, but overwhelmingly in favor of some permit limits.

How do we want to limit when permits are required?

- Selk proposed that there should be a limit on stream size (using cfs), as with lakes, for permits to be allowed.
- Hilbert stated that if all weigh-in tournaments require a permit, then limits using the minimum number of boats or prizes awarded would not make a difference.
- Brovarney and Soletske suggested that the minimum prizes awarded criteria for permits be thrown out.
- Schmalz offered that perhaps this is where annual club permits could come in. Hilbert agreed that if workload is to be cut that annual permits are needed.
- Hujik suggested permits for tournaments of 10 boats or more and annual permits for smaller groups.
- Tim Kroeff brought up the Door/Kewaunee Trout Tournament which is for eight days. Schmalz stated that it is questionable whether it is a tournament because not everyone is required to fish at the same time.
- Andryk reminded that workload needs to be kept in mind. He suggested that scenarios be created of the number of permits expected by type (large, small

club, ice fishing, etc) to estimate workload. He questioned if ice fishing tournament permits are needed?

- Ted Lind did not think that the proposal would pass the legislature if hundreds of small clubs were required to have permits for every event.

Lake size restrictions – specifically for lakes less than 150 acres

- Hujik suggested getting rid of the <150 acre restriction and making a category of lakes from 0-300 acres that may be permitted.
- Dreher (the original advocate for excluding small lakes) suggested making the number of boats and participant/days on small lakes proportionally smaller (based on Schmalz's table) and permitting them.
- Tom Van Haren felt ice fishing tournaments on small lakes should not be limited. Andryk suggested that ice tournaments on small lakes would be self limiting due to space constraints and that lake size limits would not need to be set for non-boat tournaments.
- Kubisiak, Vanderhoef, Soletske, and Dreher brought up safety and harvest concerns about large ice fishing tournaments (sold by hole). They felt that these should be regulated in some fashion.

Application Process

- Hilbert concerned with process timeline because WBF does not plan for the following years tournaments until November.
- Welke raised concern that grandfathered tournaments will get all of the favorable dates. Schmalz replied that application fees are meant to stop this.
- Sue Beyler raised the point that there should be a separate timeline for grandfathered events.

Tournament Fees

- There was significant concern about a large non-refundable application fee if event organizers are not guaranteed that they will be able to find a tournament date that will work.
- Ron Benjamin suggests that a smaller application fee followed by a permit/processing fee once a tournament date was guaranteed would be more appropriate.
- Poll suggested that the permit fee could be based on the number of participants or the amount of prizes awarded. Brovarney asked if we can tie the permit fees to the cost of entrance fees.
- Andryk suggested creating a database allowing users to check on the availability of tournament dates before hand.
- Andryk stated that we do not have the legal authority to set tournament application fees.
- Heitschmidt would like to have a tournament stamp.
- The group voted on three application fee options:
 1. Non-refundable application fee + per participant fee → 4
 2. Non-refundable application fee + per entrance fee increase → 5
 3. Straight fee → 5

- **Andryk suggested that we need to have an estimate of how many permits will be coming in and know whether the intention is to make the tournament program self-sustaining before we can set fees.**
- **Van Haren stated that the administration of the program needs to be self-sustaining, but enforcement time does not need to be included in program costs.**

Live Release

- **Benjamin suggested that catch-hold-release tournaments should not be allowed for summer bass tournaments in LMB Virus waterbodies. These tournaments should be catch-kill or immediate release. Schmalz reminded that this is the most conservative approach. Southern states took no regulatory action against LMB Virus.**

III. Creation Sub-Committees (1 hour)

- A. **Tournament Rules Sub-Committee – Steve Poll, Robert Selk, Bob Hujik, Terry H., Mark Soletske, John Kubisiak, Brett Stapelmann, Roger Dreher, Ted Lind, Tim Andryk**
- B. **Pilot Program Evaluation Sub-Committee**

IV. Next meeting (10 minutes)

- A. **Tournament Rules Sub-Committee**
- B. **Pilot Program Evaluation Sub-Committee**
- **Both sub-committees should meet the week of March 6th.**
- **Fishing Tournament Advisory Committee will meet again in late April.**

V. Other Issues (as time permits)